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*Some Considerations on the History of ancient amatory Writers, and the comparative merits of the three great ROMAN Elegiac Poets, OVID, TIBULLUS and PROPERTIUS, by WILLIAM PRESTON, Esq.*

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THE history of poetry ancient and modern, shews us, that *erotic* compositions are not the growth of rude manners, and early ages of society. That such is the fact, cannot be denied; I have endeavoured to account for it, in an essay which has for its subject, the *manners of the heroic ages, as far as they have relation to poetry, and tend to influence and determine its objects, and its style.* In the paper to which I refer, I have attempted to maintain this proposition, by shewing\*, that where savage manners, prevail, which, (with reverence be it spoken) was the case in those ages called *heroic*, love can have no place, as a permanent emotion, or ruling passion, sufficiently fixed to become an object of poetical description, sufficiently important, to engross a large share of influence over the interests of society, to become the theme of a species of poetry devoted to itself, and to secure attention to the popular minstrel, who should make it the ground-work of his song.

This hypothesis certainly seems to be justified by a reference to the history of poetry. Love, for example, is introduced, but

\* It is one of a series of essays, subjoined to a translation of Apollonius Rhodius, by the Author.

sparingly, in the poems of Homer, that faithful painter of heroic manners. We perceive none of the fine strokes, the soft unfoldings of the enamoured heart, that mark a writer, who has deeply studied the tender emotions. *Hesiod* has nothing of it. There is very little of it in the *Argonautics*, falsely ascribed to *Orpheus*,\* though the event of the poem hinges on a love intrigue. It is surprizing, how little of love we find in the numerous plays, which yet remain of the three great tragedians of *Greece*; and as to the poem falsely ascribed to *Musæus*, on the subject of the Loves of Hero and Leander. It is confessedly, the production of an age long subsequent, indeed, to that of the venerable *Musæus*, who was the son, according to some, and certainly the disciple of *Orpheus*, and contemporary with *David* the monarch, the bard, and prophet of the *Jews*. *Alcman* or *Alcæus*, who seems to have been the first writer, who devoted his talents expressly to amatory compositions, which he wrote in lyric measure, was a native of *Sardis* in *Lydia*, a city and a region then flourishing in commerce, wealth, and splendor, and plunged in all the gratifications of luxury and sensual indulgence. This must have imparted a more than *Asiatic* softness to the manners of the inhabitants; and besides, *Alcman* appears to have flourished, full three hundred years subsequent to *Homer*.† A small fragment of this writer remains; it is cited by *Athenæus*. *Alcman* speaks thus of himself, and, his own feelings, in those lines, which are to be found in *Athenæus*.

The joys which Venus can bestow,  
With sweetnes all my soul o'overflow.

Ἐγώστ με δέ αὐτει Κυπρίδος εκάτι  
Γλυκύστ καλεῖσθαι καρδιαν ταῖνει.

*Alcæus*, the illustrious poet of *Lebos*, the inventor of that noblest kind of lyric measure, *Alcaic* verse, amidst the various objects, which employed

\* Far from offering the delicate strokes of nature, and feminine feelings, which are found in *Apollonius Rhodius*, *Onomacritus*, the author of this poem represents *Medea* as a bold, forward, and ferocious wanton.

† *Saxii Vol. 1. Pa. 15.*

employed his sublime, but versatile *genius*, stooped, at times, to unbend himself, with the erotic muse. It is to be observed, that he lived full two generations later than *Alcman*, and that the island of which he was a native, flourished, in commerce and wealth. It had a number of famous and opulent cities,\* and was the abode of pleasure, or rather of unrestrained licentiousness. *Lesbos* produced a succession of men of genius, who transmitted to each other the honour, of excelling the other natives of *Greece*, in the art of music. *Sappho* was also a native of the island, and cotemporary with *Alcaeus*, who is said, to have been inspired with a passion for her. It is not wonderful, that poetical genius, inspiring the tender bosom of a female, soft and impassioned, like that of *Sappho*, and fostered, and cherished, by the voluptuous air of a bland and delicious climate, and the soft fascination of that abode of pleasure, and license, where every thing around breathed the indulgence of sense, and amorous delight, should have produced the most lively and affecting descriptions of the emotions of love. Nor was this charming talent confined, among females, to *Sappho*: the fair sex in *Greece*, seems about this time, to have been very generally inspired. The learned *Olearius* has written a dissertation, on the poetesses of antiquity; and their number, according to him, is very considerable! Nine of them, in particular, equal in number to the Muses, and worthy of being compared to them, emulated the reputation of the best poets of the other sex; their names were *Sappho*, *Myrtis*, *Prexilla*, *Erinna*, *Corinna*, *Nossis*, *Myro*, *Teleilla* and *Anyta*. They are all recorded, in the following verbes of *Antipater*,

Ταῦτα θεογλωσσοῦ Ελικῶν ἐδρεψε γυναικας  
Τμοῖς, καὶ μακρῶν πτερίος σπονδαῖς,  
Πρηξίλλαν, μετρα, Αετῆς γομφα, θύλαι Ορμοῖς  
Δεσφιαδαν 'Σαφω ποστρᾶς αντιθεσμοῖς  
Ηριαν, Τελεστίδαν αγανδα, καὶ σο, Κοριντα,  
Θυριν Αθηναῖς ασπεδεις μελιφαμενα.  
Νοσσίδα θηλογλωσσον, οὐδε γλυκυκαχεα μυρίν  
Πασαο 'απναν εργαδας σελιδαν,  
Επινεα-μεν μυσαε μυγαο' οργανο, επινεα' ανταο'  
Βασι ληκε θεοῖς αρβίλος ανθραστηνο.

These

\* As *Mitylene*, *Pyrrha*, *Methymna*, *Arcesiba*, *Erebus*, and *Antissa*.

These *Helicon* and the *Pierian* rock,  
 Nurtur'd with song divine, immortal minds  
 Of heav'n-taught women ! with *Prexilla*, *Myro*  
 And *Anyta*, who equall'd in renown  
 The *Chian* father of heroic song ;  
*Sappho*, that ornament of *Lesbian* dames,  
*Erinna*, *Telmissa*, and *Corinna*,  
 Who sang the shield of *Pallas*, *Noës* fair,  
 With *Myro* sweet of song.—All these abound  
 In wreaths, that ever bloom. These heav'n endow'd,  
 A second choir of Muses ; these the earth  
 Produc'd, as sources of divine delight.

In his *Tusculan* disputationes, Lib. 4th. 33, Cicero mentions *Ibycus Rheginus*, as the poet who surpassed all others, in the ardor of his amorous feelings,

Maxime vero omnium flagrasse amore *Ibycum*.

And this poet speaks of himself, and his mastery on the topic of love, in elated and magnificent terms, in some verses, which have been preserved by *Athenaeus*. I have attempted to give the reader a faint idea of their spirit and purport, by the following imitation.

VERSES OF *IBYCUS RHEGINUS*.

Naiads soft, *Cydonian* maids,  
 When the leaf embrowns the shades,  
 When the birds their carol sing,  
 Pour the streamlets from the spring.  
 Vernal gales awake the vine,  
 Leaves to spread, and tendrils join,  
 Bid the little suckers grow,  
 Soon with racy juice to flow.—  
 In that season, maidens fair  
 To the crystal streams repair,  
 Virgin gardens of delight,  
 Kind of heart, in feature bright.—  
 These are they that wing the dart.  
 These are they that fire my heart.—  
 Wakeful love within my breast,  
 Never never gives me rest.

Not

Not a season, not an hour  
 Frees me from the tyrant's pow'r.  
 Like the Thracian winds that fly,  
 Like the lightning from the sky,  
 Swift his arrows pierce the soul,  
 Swift enflame with fierce controul;  
 From such objects of desire,  
 Madding rage, consuming fire,  
 Mock the senses with illusion,  
 Fill the spirit with confusion,  
 Dreadful offspring of delight,  
 He confounds me in his might.  
 All my thoughts and wishes filling,  
 Waking pangs, desires instilling,  
 Cruel tyrant of the breast,  
 Never does he give me rest.

*Mimnermus*,\* the inventor of elegiac composition, whom *Horace* scruples not to place above *Callimachus*; *Mimnermus*, who thought and wrote with so much nature, amenity, and tenderness, and in such an easy and flowing style, was rather younger than *Sappho*. He was a native of *Asiatic Greece*, (having been born in *Smyrna*, or, according to other accounts, in *Golophon*, a country which, perhaps, surpassed all others, in luxury, softness of manners, and amorous indulgence.) The few fragments† which yet remain, of this amiable and admired poet, breath the spirit of the voluptuary; and show that love and the pursuit of pleasure predominated in his soul; and formed the business of his life. “Love and sport,” says he, “form all the charm of existence; let us love and sport.”

“ *Si Mimnermus uti censem sine amore jocisque*  
 “ *Nil est jucundum, vivas in amore jocisque.*”

HORACE.

With more seriousness, reflection, and pathos, than *Anacreon*, he was equally the poet of love and dissipation. As a writer, he appears to

\* See *Saxius*.

† See Brunk's *Analecta*, Vol. 1st.

to have possest copiousness, grace, and a true poetical spirit. He is placed in the same degree of eminence, among amatory writers, that *Homer* holds among the ancient bards of epic song. He must have painted the seducing emotions of love in the most glowing colours, and with a master's hand ; since the best judge imaginable says,

“ Plus in amore valet *Mimnermi*,  
“ *Verus Homero.*

*Propertius, L. 4, Eleg.*

It is said by *Solinus*, that the *Asiatics* were as remarkable for genius as for luxury. “ *Ingenia Asiatica inclita per gentes fecere poetæ* “ *Anacreon, Mimnermus, et Antimachus.*” Nor is it surprising. *Asia Minor* was the country on earth the most beautiful, the most diversified, the most susceptible of improvement, and most capable of supporting a great population. No country has coasts more winding, or more numerous, safe and spacious harbours.

*Anacreon*, the voluptuous, the elegant and amorous *Anacreon*, was another offspring and ornament of that charming region, *Ionia*, in which every thing respired voluptuousness. He was born at *Teios*, about two ages subsequent to *Mimnermus*. With similar talents and propensities to those of that master of love and poetry, he felt all the force of the climate, all the influence of the moral causes, that prevailed in *Ionia*, to relax the virtue, and fascinate the mind. “ Have we not felt,” says *Barthelemy*,\* “ a delicious languor insinuate itself into our souls, and throw “ us, if I may so speak, into the intoxication of happiness ? Such is “ the influence of the climate of *Ionia*, and as moral causes, far from “ correcting, have only tended to encrease it, the *Ionians* are become “ the most effeminate, but, at the same time, are to be numbered “ among the most amiable people of *Greece*.” The gay and amorous disposition, and the love of pleasure infused into the poet at his birth, fostered by every breath he drew, in that bewitching climate, confirmed by education, and the example of all around him in his native country, were

\* Travels of *Anacharsis*, speaking in the person of the philosopher.

were gratified; and expanded by full indulgent, in the elegant *but* dissolute enjoyments of the *Samian* court, where his disposition and talents recommended him to the protection and friendship of *Polycrates*, the sovereign of the *island*.

Long subsequent to those writers, whom I have mentioned, was *Theocritus*, who painted pastoral scenes, and pastoral manners, with so much truth and simplicity, and did such ample justice to the tender emotions of the young and enamoured heart. He lived when society had attained a degree of refinement and elegance, the manners of men, a measure of luxurious softness, differing somewhat in form and kind, but fully equal to what prevails at the present day among the most refined and polished nations. Although the *Sicilian* poet delighted in rustic subjects, his education, his habits of life, and his muse were by no means rustic: he joins the manners of *Arcadia*, with the softness and refinement of a court. No writer is more successful in painting the fond wishes, the ardent aspirations, the languor and imperious dominion of love, possessing the young and artless bosom with impetuous and irresistible influence; the entire abandonment of the heart and wishes, to the controul of this delightful and fascinating passion. This is accompanied by a smooth and melodious versification, a sweetness and simplicity of language, an unaffected ease of construction, all rendered more charming and engaging, by the use of the Doric dialect, so replete with unstudied and rustic sweetnes. We are carried back by enchantment, into *Arcadian* times. We listen to the shepherd's pipe, whose stops are attempered by the hands of love himself. Thus contrasted is the catalogue of the ancient *Grecians*, who have written professedly on the subject of love.

I am sensible that in some of the assertions, I have made, I differ in some measure from that elegant and accomplished writer, Sir *William Jones*, who in his commentaries on *Asiatic Poetry*, (Cap. 15, de Poesi Amatoriâ.—Works, vol. 2, page 543,) seems to consider amatory poetry as being one of the first productions of the human intellect, and equally the offspring and the delight of every stage of society, from the rudest to the most

polished. I do not apprehend that the position, which he has laid down, in such latitude, is warranted by experience, or the history of human intellect, or human society. I do not think that it is supported, by the quotations and instances adduced by the amiable author himself. I apprehend, that he is rather too eager to press the more ancient Greek poets into the service of love, and that he does not sufficiently distinguish, as I would wish the reader to do, between the strains of the voluptuary and the sensualist, and the poetry of love. The *Greek* poets to whom he refers, as *Alcman* and *Ibycus*, and perhaps a few passages, in the dramatic writers, in the way of general reflection on the universal dominion and power of love, do not, by any means, support his position to the extent in which it is advanced, of the universal and early prevalence of love poetry, even in the first and rudest stages of society. The Greek poets in question, wrote when society was very far advanced, when politeness and luxury had reached a very high pitch, and in countries, too, where politeness and luxury peculiarly prevailed. Such instances, therefore, do not illustrate or support his opinion. And besides, I cannot bring myself to give the names of amatory poets on such writers as *Alcman*, *Ibycus*, or *Anacreon*, who devoted their muses to pleasure and sensual enjoyments, and sung the charms of mirth and revelry, and indiscriminate indulgence with the fair sex, without entering into the bosom like *Sappho*, and painting the tumults of desire, the emotions of passion;—as well might we give the title of erotic poets, to such modern writers, as *Chaulieu*, *La Fare*, and *Grecourt*.

It is true that the influence of beauty is universal, that there is no race so savage and uncultivated; no breast so dull and gloomy, as to be insensible to its enchanting splendour. This, no doubt, is true in a certain degree, but in the manners of the heroic ages are many peculiar circumstances which serve to guarantee men in that state of society, against the sweet seductions of love. Sir *William Jones* quotes \* *Carcillasso*, to shew that the *Peruvians* excelled in amatory poetry, and most expressive love songs. But it will occur to the recollection of

every

\* See *Sir William Jones*, *Poeſeos Asiat. Comment.* Cap. 15, de *Poesi Amatoria*, Works, vol. 2, page 543.

every reader, that the Peruvians, of whom he speaks were in a very advanced state of society, and a high degree of cultivation; and the happy government under which they resided, must have added to the softness of their dispositions, and the amenity of their manners.

Sir William Jones also refers to the specimens of *Lapland* poetry, which have been preserved in *Scheffer*, as further proofs of the universal dominion of love; but it is to be observed, with respect to the Laplanders, that they form an exception to the general rules, drawn from the observations made on other tribes of men, and to the conclusions, which may arise on a view of the general history of human nature; their situation being very peculiar, and calculated to produce in them an extraordinary and early mildness of manner, and an inordinate propensity to certain pleasures. Their situation was and is such as to exempt them altogether from being in the heroic state, that is to say, from the state of warfare, spoil, and rapine. Their country affords nothing to invite hostile aggression. Simple in their mode of life, bounded in their wishes, attached with enthusiasm to their native country, mild in their tempers, small in stature, and possessing very little bodily strength, they have neither the disposition nor the ability to commit violence, or invade their neighbours. The state of indolence to which they are doomed during the long continuance of their polar night, disposes them to an indulgence in all the sensual enjoyments their state affords. Ease and indolence have ever been the fruitful parents of love and amatory compositions, and a number of these people being collected together in their subterraneous habitations, or assembled in their sledges, on the snow, to beguile the hours with various amusements, the two sexes thus assembled for the purposes of mirth and enjoyment, and the being as happy as they could, were disposed to conciliate the affections of each other, by every means they could devise, and on these occasions, songs of love were not forgotten. Besides, it must be remembered, that the *Laplanders*, whose amorous ditties are thus preserved, are to be considered, as being in a sort of pastoral state; their reindeer constituted their wealth, and at this day, in fact, the

mode of life, the occupations and amusements of this mild and harmless race appear to have undergone very little change, during a long succession of ages. The reader will find an interesting account of the present state, and existing manners of the *Laplanders*, in a lively and entertaining work entitled, “ Letters from *Scandinavia*.<sup>\*</sup>”

I shall not here mention such a writer as *Meleager Gadarenus*,† as claiming a title to the palm of erotic poetry: notwithstanding the beauty and elegance of his compositions, and his having devoted his strains exclusively to the effusions of passion. It would be a profanation of the name of love, to apply it to the licentious and unblushing muse, and the criminal desires of this writer. The reader will please to recollect, that I wish to distinguish between the poetry of the voluptuary and the lover. He will perceive, that the latter has more of sentiment and less of sensuality, and to this alone should I be disposed to allow the name of erotic poetry, and still less am I inclined to concede it to those polluted rhymes, that prostitute the muses in the service of vice, obscenity, and licentiousness.

Neither do I speak of the swarm of comparatively modern novelists of the *Milesian* school, the spawn of corrupted literature, and degenerate times: but of the classical and pure ages of Grecian learning.

As I have already observed, that, on consideration of the manners of the heroic ages, of ancient Greece, the reader will find many strong reasons, which may lead him to think, that erotic poetry could not flourish, nay, could scarcely have been known, in that state and period of society: so, it seems to be very manifest, that, in succeeding ages, the democratic institutions, and republican forms of government, which were established in general through most states of Greece, provided

\* This work though a compilation, has a great air of originality.

† *Meleager the Gadarenian*, a Syrian by birth, flourished about 96 years before Christ. See Fabric. Bibl. Græc. c. 28, pa 682, vol. 2. *Saxxii Onomast*: v. 1. p. 142. The works of *Meleager* are chiefly short epigrams, replete as well with licentiousness, as with taste and elegance. Their number is considerable; they are to be found in the first volume of *Brunck's Analecta*.

ed equally unfavourable to the dominion of the softer feelings, and to the prevalence, and scientific consideration of love, its arts, and its pursuits. This originated, partly, from the severity of republican manners and institutions, which encouraged a pride of spirit, an arrogance of demeanour, and overbearing temper; and augmented the natural sternness of nature, indeed, I shall not scruple to call it the ferocity, which, I think, on a fair perusal of their history, will appear to be generally imputable to the ancient *Greeks*. Republican forms of government, disposing and admitting every person to take a part in public affairs, furnish a superior degree of occupation for the mind, and this kind of occupation is, above all other circumstances, unfavourable to the dominion of love, and the submission of the spirit to the seducing encroachments of the soft feelings. The cause of love is little advanced, the empire of the gentler sex is not much promoted by the *Athenian Muses*. In the majestic and gigantic compositions of the fierce and indignant *Æschylus*, that father of tragedy, whose bold aspiring genius was nurtured amidst dangers, and scenes of horror, in camps, and fighting fields, we could not reasonably expect many displays of the softer emotions. He dares to meet the furies, face to face, to drag them in all their horrors on the stage.

We are more surprised, when we discover, that in the remains of *Sophocles*, the prince of the *Greek* tragedians, there is not a single play, which turns on the passion of love; nor does there appear to have been any piece of the amorous character, among the numerous works of that writer, which have perished.\* *Euripides*, who affected to choose

pathetic

\* He is said to have produced ny less than ninety plays; the titles of many of them are preserved.

In the *Iphigenia in Aulis*, which offers so fair an occasion for it, there is very little of love. The *Medea*, which gives a fine picture of resentful and jealous rage, and the *Alcestis*, which gives a beautiful representation of maternal tenderness and conjugal affection, do not, I apprehend, form any exception to the general position.

The beautiful portraiture of the amorous irresolution of *Phædia*, in the *Eunuch*, and the delightful description of the appearance and feelings of *Philumena*, in the *Self-Tormentor*,

pathetic subjects, and excelled, in painting distressful scenes, and the emotions excited by them, has but one tragedy founded on love, and that is grounded on a subject little favourable to the passion of love, in general, or to the attachment to the fair sex.—The incestuous passion of *Phædra* for her step-son. In the plays of *Terence*, which, being translated or imitated from *Menander*, must be supposed to contain a faithful picture of *Athenian* manners, and that too, when they were at the highest pitch of refinement, the passion of love is treated in a very coarse manner, and the conduct of men to the fair sex is very deficient, in politeness, gallantry, and tenderness. Such was the state of society in the republics of the continent of proper *Greece*. The case was far different, in *Ionia*, and the different *Greek* islands, which were, in general, subject to some form of regal domination, either under the *Persian* monarchy, and its satraps, or little sovereigns of their own. The writers in these countries saw the splendour of regal pomp, and the luxury of a court, in every state and city, forming a strong contrast to the simplicity of republican manners, which lavished all splendour and greatness on the public edifices, and monuments, and confined the habitations, expences, and pleasures of the citizens, within narrow and parsimonious bounds. The inhabitants of the islands and *Asiatic Greece*, deprived of the exercise of power, a trust, of which their native indolence rendered them little capable, were easily consoled for the loss, by their being relieved from the cares of government, the burthens of civil duties, and consigned to the full and uninterrupted enjoyment, of the wealth, that flowed in upon them, as it were spontaneously, and those pleasures, luxuries and amusements, to which the natural gaiety of their tempers, and the influence of a soft and relaxing climate, irresistibly disposed them.

It is observable, that the *Lydian* measure or style of musical composition was the most effeminate and voluptuous of all those, which were known to the *Greeks*; as is observed by Dryden,

Softly

*Tormentor*, do not countervail the general character I have given of the *Athenian* muses; since other passages of equal delicacy and feeling do not occur; and any conclusion which might be drawn from these, is counteracted by the coarse picture of manners, which *Terence* uniformly gives us, except in these instances.

Softly sweet in *Lydian* measures,  
Thus he sooth'd his soul to pleasures.

The *Roman* language, however, and the elegant, the luxurious and gallant court of *Augustus* were destined to exhibit amatory poetry, in its full perfection, in the persons of the three great poets, *Ovid*, *Tibullus* and *Propertius*. These celebrated and justly admirable contemporaries, though they treat on a common subject, show much originality of genius and manner, and differ, in a singular and striking degree, from each other; while the critical reader stands suspended, and is doubtful, on which he shall bestow the preference, and at last bestows it, rather according to his peculiar taste and fancy, than from a decided conviction of the real superiority of the writer, whom he thus prefers.

*Ovid*, *Tibullus* and *Propertius* have this in common, that they did not merely produce light and occasional amorous effusions, the offspring of carelessness, chance and leisure. They seem, to have given their whole souls and affections to the pursuits of love; to have made that passion the grand object of their lives; the great and favourite subject of their muse. This admirable triumvirate appeared, in fact, to have looked on their amatory compositions, with the conscious pride of genius; and to have considered them as the surest foundations of their pretensions to poetical reputation. In forming this judgment of their own pretensions and talents, they were perfectly well founded; for, in their productions consecrated to love, they shew an energy and talent, a care, a study, a correctness of composition, and a knowledge of the human heart, a feeling of all the doubts and uncertainties, the pains and pleasures, the hopes and fears of the delightful but tormenting passion, which they celebrate, such as scarcely ever has been equalled in any language, and certainly never has been surpassed.

*Ovid* surpasses his rivals and contemporaries, in fancy, gaiety, ingenuity, and wit; *Tibullus*, in nature, pathos, real tenderness, sweetness, ease and unaffected simplicity; *Propertius* excels, in sublimity, loftiness of manner, dignity and refinement of sentiment, purity of passion, and learning,

learning, in which last respect, he sometimes however, runs riot, and may justly incur the censure of pedantry. But, let us examine their pretensions more in detail.

Nature was uncommonly liberal to *Ovid*: his spirit is lively and fertile, his fancy is rich, and abounding in the most beautiful images, his expression is easy, flowing and abundant, ever seeming to outrun his thoughts, copious as they are. With these great qualities, he seems to have been one of the first, who spoiled the pure taste of the *Romans*. He is lavish in flowers and ornaments, in fallies of imagination, in conceits and points of wit; in his morality, he is most relaxed and vicious, in his taste and sentiments, the least pure and delicate of the triumvirate. Many of his subjects are licentious, many immoral, in the highest degree, and not only scattered passages, but entire compositions are such, as are highly offensive to decency, and must shock the modest reader. Others, again, are gay and volatile, light and fanciful, like those airy and playful fallies, in which the French poets, and *Prior* among *English* writers, so much excelled. The most considerable and finished productions of *Ovid*, on the subject of love, are his *Heroides* or love epistles written in the persons of eminent females of antiquity, as *Phædra*, *Hermione*, *Ænone*, and his *Art of Love*, a composition which equals any thing that we know in ancient or modern poetry, in address, gay and sportive pleasantry, not unmixed with covert satire, a knowledge of the world, and a perfect acquaintance with the foibles and propensities of the fair-sex. His *Amores*, or books of occasional love elegies, are the most interesting part, however, of *Ovid's* writings. They give the most perfect image of his temper, disposition, and manner of life, and are those productions in which he admits of the most direct and fair comparison, with *Tibullus* and *Propertius*. Nor are these elegies the most interesting parts of the works of *Ovid*, merely with respect to the poet himself, they tend to bring us acquainted, with the private life, the manners, the dispositions and habits, not of him only, but of all the courtly and dissipated part of the *Roman* people, in general. We read them, with the lively sensations of pleasures,

which

which attend every faithful picture of society and manners. The reader will find instances of the light sportive manner of *Ovid*, in the 14th elegy of the first book, to console his mistress, whose tresses had fallen off, through too much care of them.

Dicebam medicare tuos desiste capillos,  
Fingere quam possis jam tibi,  
Nulla coma est, &c.

Forbear to stain the honours of thy head,  
Rash maid forbear, how often have I said.  
My words were scorn'd; and now no hairs remain,  
For impious hands, unhappy maid, to stain.

The reader will be amused, to see how much ingenuity and learning the poet bestows on this important subject. The fourth of the second book, that he loves women of every form and complexion, the sentiments of which have been imitated over and over again, by succeeding poets; and the sixth of the same book, on the death of a Parrot, show how much *Ovid* excelled in trifling agreeably.

*Psittacus* eois imitatrix ales ab *Indis*,  
Occidit, exequias ite frequenter ayes;  
Ite piæ volucres, et plangite pectora pennis,  
Et rigido teneras ungue notale genas, &c. &c. &c.

'Tis past and done, the parrot lives no more,  
That imitative bird from *India's* shore.  
In flocks attend, his obsequies to grace,  
With pious sorrows, all ye plamy race.  
In mournful action be your woes confess,  
With sounding pinions beat the feeling breast,  
And rend your ruffled plumes, like flowing hair,  
And mark with cruel claws the visage fair.

The fourth elegy of the first, the seventh of the same, to appease his mistress, whom he had beaten. The seventh of the second book, in which he clears himself to his mistress, from the suspicion of loving

her waiting-maid, give us curious pictures of *Roman* manners, and of the degree of coarseness and indelicacy, which even then prevailed, in the midst of refinement and luxury. The very next elegy to *Cyparis*, the girl in question, is written with much pleasantry, and uncommon ingenuity, and shews that the suspicions of *Corinna*, her mistress, were not without foundation. In his beautiful elegy on the death of *Tibullus*, where the pathos of the sentiment, vies with the elegance of the plan, and the graces of composition; the poet has proved how much he could have excelled in the grave and tender departments of poetry, had he been sufficiently sober and sedate to confine himself to them. But, though infinitely superior in talents, and amiable accomplishments, to the English nobleman of profligate memory, in dissolute manners, and unblushing profligacy, poor *Ovid* seems to have been the *Rochester* of the court of *Augustus*. What shall we say of the poet and his mistress, when we come to the fourteenth elegy of the second book, *In Anicam, quod abortum ipsa fecerit?* What shall we say of the depravity of the *Roman* people, even in the time of *Augustus*, when an act of such serious delinquency, a subject of so much horror and abomination could be thought a fit theme of witty fallies and poetical embellishments? And we find, that, although the poet addresses the woman he loves, on this tragical and revolting topic, he not only forbears to show any indignation, but even displays a mind at ease, and a degree of levity, and exhausts his ingenuity, in a variety of amusing and far-fetched common places, on the occasion.

Let us now, turn from *Ovid*, and cast our eyes on a writer, of a very different character, and disposition.

*Tibullus* was not less amiable and gentle, in his manners and disposition than in his muse. The graces of his appearance, the charms of his conversation, and poetical productions rendered him the distinguished favourite of many of the most illustrious persons in *Rome*, among others, of *Meffala Corvinus*, of whom he speaks, with a mixture of affection and veneration. It is a convincing proof of the gentle temper and engaging disposition of *Tibullus*, that he was most entirely beloved

loved by the poets, who were his contemporaries. *Horace* addresses him, in the most familiar and affectionate manner,\* and his death is lamented by *Ovid*, in strains of the most pathetic poetry, where the friendship of the writer is not less conspicuous, than his genius, in the beautiful elegy which begins,

Memnona si mater, mater ploravit Achillem. &c.

The style of *Tibullus* is uncommonly pure and perfect; and his versification is easy, sweet and flowing; They reflect an image of the mild and candid mind, the gentle disposition, and refined taste of the writer. In every line we see the feeling heart, the sympathetic softness, the captivating tenderness, the unambitious love of rural scenes, rural pleasures, and domestic enjoyments in modest and humble privacy, of this sweet and unsophisticated child of nature. There is no writer, who expresses so perfectly the sentiments and wishes of the young and tender heart, incapable of disguise, undebauched by commerce with a selfish and unfeeling world. Even the *English* reader may be able to judge, whether this is a just character of the natural and amiable *Tibullus*. His manner of writing and thinking are rendered familiar even to the unlettered reader, through the medium of *Hammond's Elegies*, which are nothing more than elegant translations of select passages from the Latin author; and of the late version of *Grainger*.

Quam juvat immites ventos audire cubantem;  
Et dominam tenero continuisse finu;  
Aut gelidas Hibernus aquas cum fuderit austere-  
Securum somnos imbre juvante sequi.

What joy to hear the tempest howl in vain,  
And clasp a fearful mistress to my breast:  
Or lull'd to slumber by the beating rain,  
Secure and happy sink at last to rest,

*Hammond.*

U 2

O Quantum

\* Ode 33, Book 1st. *Albi ne doleas*, &c.

O quantum est auri pereat, potiusque smaragdi,  
 Quam fleat ob nostras ulla puella vias!  
 Te bellare decet terrâ, Messala marique,  
 Ut domus hostiles præferat exuvias.  
 Me retinent vincum formosæ vincula puellæ,  
 Et sedeo duras janitor ante fores.  
 Non ego laudari curo mea *Delia*: tecum  
 Dummodo sim, quæso segnis, inersque vocer.

Et te dum liceat teneris retinere lacertis,  
 Mollis et inulta sit mihi somnus humo.

Ferreus ille fuit, qui, te cum possit habere,  
 Malluerit prædas stultus et arma sequi.

Te spætem supra mea mihi cum venerit hora,  
 Te teneam moriens desiciente manu.

However, we may admire the tenderness and sweet simplicity of this poet, the truth and nature of his sentiments, the purity of his language, it must be admitted, that we do not find in him the dignified and ennobling *platonism* of love poetry; and that *Tibullus* dwells merely on external graces. Dissolved in love and tenderness, his whole spirit is possessed with the image of his *Delia*, but mental accomplishments make no part of that image. He wishes for nothing so ardently as the happiness of possessing her, but never speaks of the pleasures resulting from the rational intercourse of two polished minds, or the consciousness of being beloved by a woman of merit.

*Propertius* seems most nearly to approach *Petrarch*, in violence of passion, and energy of expression; his elegies soar to an higher pitch than those of *Tibullus*, and display greater force of thought, with a more extensive knowledge of the world, more fancy and learning, with a great variety of contending passions. His suspicions are easily awokened, and as easily calmed. His writings are filled alternately with the most poignant reproaches, and the most passionate expressions of fondness. He knows no bound, no moderation in his feelings; for ever ingenious to torment himself, for ever tost by a raging storm of jealousy

jealousy or love; we behold in him a fierce ardour of desire, an impetuous burst of passion not unlike what *Shakespeare* has painted in his *Moor of Venice*.

Excellent wretch! Perdition catch my soul,  
But I do love thee—and when I love thee not,  
Chaos is come again.—

Multa prius vasto labantur flumina ponto;  
Amnis et inversus duxerit ante vias.—  
An mihi sit major caræ custodia matris?  
An sine te, vitæ cura sit ulla meæ?  
Tu mihi sola domus, tu *Cynilia*, sola parentes;  
Omnia tu nostræ tempora latitiae.

Sooner the flood its downward course shall change,  
The day-star sooner from its orbit range,—  
Dearer than she from whom my being came;  
Dearer than genial light and vital flame;  
Thou art my kindred, parents, friends alone,  
Thou only comfort that my days have known.

Juro tibi per ossa matris, et ossa parentis;  
(Si fallo, cinis heu sit mihi uterque gravis,)  
Me tibi ad extremas mansurum vita tenebras,  
Ambos una fides auferet, una dies.

Shades of my buried fire, and mother, hear,  
And blast with curses if I falsely swear.  
My love, thou darling, shall to death extend;  
One faith, one hour the mutual throb shall end.

Non adeo leviter nostris puer hæsit ocellis,  
Ut meus oblio pulvis amore vacet.

Not mine the soul that glows with feeble fires,  
Not mine the love that in the grave expires.

*Tibullus* is like a soft and gentle shower, stealing on the heart of his mistress, and melting it by degrees. *Propertius* is a fierce and rapid torrent, bearing down and hurrying away every obstacle, with irresistible

fittlest fury. The latter of these poets appears to have loved a woman of great spirit and accomplishments; but of a temper as violent as his own. He seems to speak, with admiration of the former, with a degree of awe and terror, of the stormy bursts of the latter.

Cum tibi præsertim *Phæbus* sua carmina donet,  
Aoniamque libens Calliopea lyram,  
Unica nec desit jucundis gratia verbis,  
Omnia quæque *Venus*, quæque *Minerva* probat.

*Phæbus* on thee his darling strain bestows;  
On thee the willing muse th' *Aonian* lyre,  
Tun'd by the graces ev'ry accent flows,  
Thine, *Pallas'* gifts, with *Cytherea's* fire.

Hæc sed forma mei, pars est extrema furoris,  
Sunt majora quibus *Bæsse* perire juvat.

Yet *Bæffus*, is her bright, her matchless frame,  
The meanest object of the boundless flame.

Quantum quod posito formosè saltat *Iaccho*,  
Egit ut evantes dux *Ariadne* choros.  
Et quantum Æolio cum tentat carmina plectro,  
Par *Aganippeæ* ludere docta lyrae.

'Tis thine, when virgins thrid the mazy dance,  
'Tis thine, unrivall'd in the dance to move;  
When o'er the lyre thy flying fingers glance,  
It speaks, it thrills, it breathes the soul of love.

Hæc tibi, contulerunt cœlestia munera Divi;  
Hæc tibi, ne matrem forte dedisse putas.  
Non, non humani sunt partus talia dona,  
Ista decem menses non peperere bona.

The Gods, the Gods these heavenly gifts bestow'd;  
Nor from thy mother such endowments came.  
No mortal birth so bright a spirit show'd,  
Nor nine months teen matur'd so fair a frame.

Of

Of her temper he speaks in the following terms, while he warns his friend of the sufferings he must encounter, should he presume to address this mistress.

Non impune feres, sciet hæc insana puella;  
Et tibi non tacitis vocibus erit.

Yet not unpunish'd—should my *Cynthia* know  
The trait'rous act, 'twere to thy shame and woe.—  
What storms of anger, what vindictive fire!  
What poignant words that wit and rage inspire!

Quid tibi vis infane? meos sentire furores?  
Infelix propéras ultima nosse mala!  
Non est illa vagis similis collata puellis,  
Molliter irasci non sciet illa tibi!

What madness! feel a passion for my fair!  
'Tis tumult, woe, delirium, and despair.—  
Unlike the maids, that common minds engage;  
Hers high-born worth, and hers vindictive rage.—  
No vulgar pride within her bosom glows,  
Her wretched lovers prove no vulgar woes.

*Propertius* successfully employs mythology and fable, for the embellishment of his compositions, and unites purity of expression, with the delicacy and charms of sentiment. As I cannot but think there is much similarity of genius, so there seems to be a similarity of fortunes between *Propertius* and *Petrarch*. *Propertius* and *Petrarch* each seem to have felt more pain than pleasure from his passion. It is probable, that *Cynthia* and *Propertius* rendered each other very uneasy, by mutual jealousy, and violence of temper.

Nec jam pallorem toties mirabere nostrum,  
Aut curæ sim toto corpore nullus ego.

Thou shalt not wonder, that this hue of death,  
O'erspreads my cheek, and fails my lab'ring breath,  
That all my limbs their wonted aid refuse,  
And on my temples hang the sickly dews.

Me dolor et lachrymæ merito fecere peritum.—

Anguish and tears have made me learned in love.

Ferte per extremas gentes et ferte per undas,  
Qua non ulla meum fœmina norit iter.

Bear me to deserts, waft me o'er the main,  
From perjur'd woman far, and far from pain !

In his elegy to *Gallus*, who had some design of rivalling him, in the affections of *Cynthia*, he says,

Sed pariter miseri socio cogemur amore,  
Alter in alterius mutua flere sinu.  
Quare quid possit mea *Cynthia*, desine, *Galle*,  
Quærere: non impune illa rogata venit.

Then we with kindred care and love possest,  
Shall pour our sorrows on each others breast;  
Then seek not, *Gallus*, seek not thou to know  
My *Cynthia*'s charms, nor fell thy days to woe.—

He concludes an elegy to his friend *Tullus*, with saying,

Tum tibi si qua mei veniet non immemor hora,  
Vivere sub duro fidere certus eris.

If to thy friend a fond remembrance strays,—  
That friend in sorrow wears his ling'ring days.

and in the third elegy of the first book, he introduces his mistrels expostulating with him, in a passionate and jealous strain; which shews that their uneasiness was mutual.

*Propertius* seems to be the only writer, among the antients, who had any notion of the dignity and value of the female character, or the heightening and improvement, that the pleasures of love receive from sentiment, and the intercourse of mind. He is one of the first poets, who intimate that a tender attachment may subsist, independent of mere personal

personal attractions and external charms, and founded in nobler motives, than meer sensual desires; he too, is perhaps the first, who intermixes grave morality with the language of passion. Speaking of the accomplishments *quæque Venus quæque Minerva probat*, he says,

His tu semper eris nostræ gratissima vitæ,  
Tædia dum miseræ fint tibi luxuriæ.

By these alone, supreme and uncontroll'd,  
Thy soft dominion o'er my spirit hold.

Me laudent doctæ solum placuisse pueræ.

Mine, mine the boast to please a learned fair.

Non ego sum formæ tantum mirator honestæ,  
Nec si qua illustres foemina jactet avos.  
Me juvat, in gremio doctæ legisse pueræ;  
Auribus et puris scripta probasse mea.

My bosom burns not for external grace;  
Nor flames, at splendors of a noble race.  
I prize the charms, that wit and taste dispense;  
When joys of reason heighten those of sense.  
I woo the muse, on *Cynthia's* breast reclin'd,  
In *Cynthia's* smile mature applause I find.—

Carmina tam sancte nulla pueræ colit.

No maid with such a high and sacred awe,  
The treasures of the heavenly muse reveres.—

In that beautiful elegy, the seventh of the fourth book, where he describes the shade of *Cynthia* appearing to him after her death: he makes her address him with this tender and benevolent request.

Sed tibi nunc mandata damus, si forte moveris,  
Si te non totum Chloridos herba tenet,  
Nutrix in tremulis ne quid desideret annis,  
*Parthenie*: patuit, nec tibi avara fuit.

Delitiaeque meæ Latris cui nomen ab usu est,  
Ne speculum dominæ porrigat illa novæ.

If *Cynthia*'s mem'ry to thy soul is dear,  
Her last request, her parting words revere :  
My nurse was friendly to thine early love ;  
When I am fled, thy bounty let her prove.—  
On the last verge of weary life's decline,  
To guard her trembling age from want be thine.—  
Thy bounty let my fav'rite *Latris* share,  
With gen'rous hand reward her duteous care.

*Propertius* seems every where to be deeply imprest, with the conscious dignity of song, to be a man of great refinement, full of virtuous feelings, and honest principles. There is throughout his writings, blended with the most passionate and intoxicating expressions of love, a noble strain of morality, and bitter invective against the luxury and vices of the age, in which he lived. In his first elegy, he laments, with animated feeling and good sense, that the disdain and cruelty of his mistress had driven him to a course of idle dissipation, and vicious society.

Donec me docuit castas odisse puellas,  
Improbis, et nullo vivere consilio.

Unhappy love depray'd my wandering soul,  
To hate the modest fair, and reason's wife controul.

The poets descants, with much indignation and energy, on the luxury and immodesty in dress and furniture of the *Romans* of his time. He thus expostulates with his mistress, on her too great solicitude to adorn her person.

Quid juvat ornato procedere vita capillo.  
Et tenues coâ veste movere sinus ?  
Aut quid *Orontea* crines perfundere myrrâ,  
Teque peregrinis vendere muneribus ?  
Naturæque decus mercato perdere cultu,  
Nec sinere in propriis membra nitere bonis ?

Why

Why are thy locks with so much labour drest?  
 What studious care reveals the snowy breast?  
 Why wafts *Arabia* clouds of fragrance round?  
 Why seek in foreign toys the power to wound?  
 Oh why should art the boast of nature hide?  
 And charms like thine be sacrific'd to pride?—  
 Trust me, thy beauties ask no heightening pains;  
 And naked love the borrow'd charm disdains.

Speaking of the native and unaffected loveliness of the beauties of antiquity, he says,

Sed facies aderat nullis obnoxia gemmis,  
 Qualis *Apelleis* color est tabulis,  
 Non illis studium vulgo conquerere amantes,  
 Illis ampla fatis forma pudicitia.

No glare of gems obscur'd the native grace,  
 A roscate hue adorn'd the blooming face.  
 No study theirs, to lure th'unguarded heart,  
 Virtue their charm, and nature all their art.

In elegy the eleventh, Book the first, addressed to *Cynthia* at *Baiae*, a famous watering place, the *Brighton* of classical times, the poet addresses that lady, in a strain of anxious and tender solicitude, mixed with serious reflexion.

Tu modo quamprimum corruptas desere *Baias*,  
 Multis ista dabunt littora dissidium,  
 Littora quæ fuerunt castis inimica puellis.  
 Ah! pereant *Baiae* crimen amoris aquæ!

Oh fly the guilty shore, th'envenom'd air,  
 That wafts divorces to the wedded pair;  
 Ye heavens, from *Baiae*, modest virgins guide,  
 Lest drowning honour perish in the tide!

He moralises thus, on the indecent paintings with which the fashionables, and opulent voluptuaries of *Rome*, in his time, were accustomed to cover their walls.

Templa pudicitiae quid opus statuisse puellis,  
 Si cuivis nuptae quidlibet esse libet?  
 Quæ manus obscenas depinxit prima tabellas,  
 Et posuit casta turpia visa domo,  
 Illa puellarum ingenuos corrupit ocellos,  
 Nequitiaque suæ noluit esse rudes.

Why teach the tender maid a graceful shame,  
 If wedded dames unbounded licence claim?  
 When painters first licentious deeds pourtray'd,  
 And guilty scenes along the walls display'd,  
 Applauding vice beheld the labour rise,  
 Th'unchaste creation stain'd the modest eyes;  
 The virgin kindled, as the artist wrought,  
 And sighs unhallow'd spoke infected thought.

Etsi me invito discedis *Cynthia, Româ,*  
 Lætor quod fine me devia rura colis.  
 Nullus erit castis juvenis corruptor in agris,  
 Qui te blanditiis non sinat esse probam.

*Cynthia*, with thee, my life and spirit fled,  
 When thou art absent, I am worse than dead.  
 Yet better thus my soul your loss sustains,  
 While rural scenes you haunt, and lonely plains.  
 In those chaste dwellings, no seductive tongue  
 Shall plighted vows and sacred friendship wrong.

*Propertius* seems to be a most determined enemy to the general custom of painting, which prevailed among the *Roman* ladies. Some of his reflections on the subject, are equally sensible and gallant.

Ut natura dedit sic omnis recta figura  
 Turpis Romano Belgicus ore color.  
 Illi sub terris fiant mala multa puellæ.  
 Quæ mentita suæ vertit inepta comas.  
 De me, mi poteris certe formosa videri;  
 Mi formosa satis, si modo sæpe venis.

Shall

Shall human art presume, with impious hand,  
 To mend the work almighty wisdom plann'd ?  
 Incongruous monsters thus may rise to view,  
 The *Roman* feature, with the *Flemish* hue.—  
 Ill fare the foolish maid, whose senseless pride,  
 From art solicits charms, that heav'n denied ;  
 O'er the fair flowing honours of the head,  
 Whose hands profane the tints fallacious spread.—  
 All charms to me in *Cynthia* seem combin'd,  
 Charms more than human, let her prove but kind.

This moral and virtuous spirit is accompanied by a generous disdain of wealth and pomp, of which the author takes occasion to profess his disregard, while he occasionally exclaims against the sordid selfishness and avaricious spirit of the *Roman* females.

Tu mea compones, et dices, ossa *Proprieti*,  
 Haec tua sunt, cheu ! tu mihi certus eras.  
 Certus eras, cheu ! quamvis nec sanguine avito  
 Nobilis, et quamvis non ita dives eras.

Thou to the grave my poor remains shall trust,  
 And say, " O earth, lie lightly o'er his dust.  
 " Not hoarded wealth, nor proud illustrious line,  
 " But artless truth and generous love were thine.

Quæritis unde avidis nox sit pretiosa puellis,  
 Et venere exhaustæ damno quærantur opes.  
 Certa quidem tantis causa est manifesta ruinis,  
 Luxuriæ nimium libera facta via est.

Oh why for gain are soft endearments sold,  
 While angry Cupid mourns the lust of gold ?  
 One fatal cause, with sweet delusive song,  
 The syren luxury enchant's the throng.

Nulla est poscendi, nulla reverentia dandi,  
 Aut si qua est, pretio tollitur ipsa mora,  
 Auro pulsa fides, auro venalia jura,  
 Aurum lex sequitur, mox sine lege pudor.

No shame witholds the bri'b'd and bribing hand ;  
 But bold corruption guides th'unblushing band.  
 For gold our faith, for gold our rights are sold,  
 For gold our laws, our virtuous shame for gold.

The reader, who is familiar with the writings of *Petrarch*, will recollect many similar sentiments and passages, and a kindred strain of virtuous indignation and energetic reproof, in the productions of that noble poet. Such, for example, is the sonnet,

La gola e'l sonno e l'otiose piume  
 Hanno del mondo ogni virtu sbaudita,  
 Ond'e dal corso suo quasi smarrita,  
 Nostra natura vinta dal costume.  
 Et e si spento ogni benigno lume,  
 Del ciel per cui s'informa humana vita,  
 Che per cosa mirabile s'adita  
 Chi vuol far d' Elicona fiume,  
 Qual vaghezza di Lauro qual di mirto ?  
 Povera e nuda vai Philosophia,  
 Dice la turba al vil guadagno intesa,  
 Pochi compagni avrai per l'altra via.

The glutton banquet, sloth and pleasure's song,  
 Have every virtue chas'd from human kind,  
 And loos'd the sinev's of the mighty mind.  
 The tyrant fashion bears the soul along ;  
 The rays of God, that dwelt the crowd among,  
 Are hid from man, to *Stygian* glooms resign'd.  
 What meed, what honours shall the laurel find ?  
 Or what the myrtle, from the sordid throng ?  
 And thou, divine Philosophy, whose lore  
 In trances rapt the spirit to the skies,  
 How lost ! how abject in these iron days !

In many other passages of this exalted writer, the reader will find strong expressions of his generous disdain of the corruptions and degraded spirit of the times.

As

As *Petrarch* strongly resembled *Propertius*, in his feeling all the importance and elevation of the character of a lover and a poet: so, these authors rejoice alike, in a sort of mysticism, compounded of the inspirations and enthusiasm of love and poetry. They exult in their sufferings, they make a merit of their voluntary self-abandonment, of their sacrifices of peace and comfort. They pride themselves, in the being as much distinguished by their sorrows as their genius. It is a favourite topic with them, to represent how much the character of a lover, and a sincere and ardent passion, tend to sublime the thoughts above selfish and sordid cares; how the devoted attachment to a virtuous and high-minded woman contributes to purify the heart, and affections; to enoble the wishes; to reclaim the warm and unrestrained feelings of youth, even through their own ardour, from low and sensual libertinism, from frivolous amusements, and the pursuit of base and unworthy objects. *Propertius* is the only poet of antiquity, who seems to view love in this advantageous light, and to speak of the fair sex, with something like rapturous deference, and true refinement. Such language and sentiments seemed to grow out of the manners of chivalry; and, in fact, *Propertius* deserves to be studied as an extraordinary phenomenon, who shews, in a period when they were generally unknown, the sentimental dignity, or rises to the spiritual devotion, which finds, in the love for one, an antidote against the allurements of the rest of the sex; a preservative of general morality, an incentive to new exertions of genius, and industry, and new motives for valuing reputation and fame, not for the sake of self alone, but, in the hope of becoming more worthy of the beloved object. All this was well understood in the times of *Petrarch*, but was little known at the court of *Augustus*.

We meet also, in *Propertius* and *Petrarch* a concurrence in a sort of voluntary humiliation and self-abasement, which reveres at a distance, awe-struck

awe-struck and confounded, approaches the beloved object, with reverential sentiments, generally appropriated to the divinity, considers love as its own reward, and the mere pleasure of loving and dwelling in rapture on tender sentiments, as superior to all the sensual gratifications of vulgar spirits.

In almost every page of *Petrarch*, passages occur, which justify the comparison I have drawn between him and *Propertius*.

*Sonnet 27.*

Ma per me lasso tornano più grave,  
Sospiri chi del cor profondo tragge  
Quella ch' al ciel se ne porto le chiavi.

O nostra vita ch' e si bella in vista,  
Com perde agevolmente in una mattina,  
Quel che' n molt' anni a gran pena s'acquista.

Hard fate of man, on whom the heav'ns bestow  
A drop of pleasure for a sea of woe;  
Ah life of care, in fears, or hopes consum'd!  
Vain hopes, that wither ere they well have bloom'd!

*Sonnetto 17.*

Lasso il mio loco e'n questa ultima schiera,  
Ch' I non son forte ad aspettar la luce  
Di questa donna, e non so fare schermi  
Di luoghi tenebrosi e d'ore tarde.  
Pero con gli occhi lagrimosi l'infermi  
Mio destino a vederla mi conduce,  
E so ben ch' io vo dietro a quel che m'arde.

— a voi non piace  
Mirar si basso con la mente altera.

Canzone 3, has much resemblance to some of the elegies of *Propertius*.

Miro

Miro pensoso le crudele stelle,  
 Chi m' hanno fatto di sensibil terra ;  
 E maledico il di ch' i' vidi 'l sole,  
 Che mi fa in vista un uom nudrito in selva.

*Canzone 4.*

Di ch' io son fatto a molta gente esempio,  
 Benche 'l mio duro scempio  
 Sia scritta altrove si, che mille penne,  
 Ne son già stanche, e quasi in ogni valle,  
 Rimbombi 'l suon de miei gravi martiri,  
 Ch'acquistan fede alla penosa vita,  
 Allor che fulminato e morto giacque  
 Il mio sperar che troppo alto montava,  
 Che perch' io non sapea dove ne quando  
 Mel ritrovassi, solo lagrimando, &c.

Poiché Madonna da pietà commossa,  
 Degno mirarmi riconobbe e vide  
 Gir de pari la pena col peccato, &c.

Spirto doglioso errante mi rimembra,  
 Per spelunche deserte e pellegrine  
 Piansi molt' anni il mio sfrenato ardire.  
 E se pur s'arma talor a dolersi  
 L'anima a cui rien manco  
 Configlio—

The reader will find something of a similar *platonism* in love, the same kind of ardent amorous devotion, in the productions of the oriental poets, particularly the *Perians* and *Arabians*, who cultivated poetry, in general, with enthusiasm, and who abound, in amatory compositions, who shew an uncommon tenderness and refinement, and have attained an acknowledged excellence and pre-eminence in this manner of writing. The reader will find a curious illustration of this observation, in the first volume of the *Asiatic Researches*, page 46, where, in an essay on the *orthography* of *Asiatic* words, a story is introduced, extracted from one of the many poems on the loves of *Mejnum* and *Leila*, the *Romeo* and *Juliet*.

*Juliet* of the East, and accompanied by a literal translation, by Sir William Jones.

The man who had inebriated himself with milk from the nipple of anguish, who had been nourished in the lap of affection.

*Meynun* mad with the bright hue and fair face of *Laili*, himself a dark mole on the cheek of the desert, having found the way to the mansion of love became fixed as the threshold on the door of love's palace.

Over his head the form of the madness had cast her shadow, the tale of his passion was loudly celebrated.

A powerful prince reigned in *Arabia*, possessing worldly magnificence and riches.

He had seen the depredations of grief through absence from a beloved object; he had plucked many a black-spotted flower from the garden of love.

Even in his infancy he had felt the pain of separation: the bitter taste of that poison remained on his palate.

When he learned the story of that afflicted lover, he instantly gave an order to a slave,

Saying, make thy head like thy feet, in running towards *Najd*; go with celerity, like a violent wind.

Bring speedily with thee to my presence, her who has stolen the heart of *Meynun*, with a glance.

The stripling ran, and in a short time brought *Laili*, that empress in the dominion of beauty.

To another slave the prince gave this order: Run thou also into the desert.

Go to that ornament of frantic lovers, *Mejnum*, the illuminated taper of love.

Bring quickly before me that enflamed youth, that heart-consumed, anguish-pierced lover.

The

The boy went, and returned in the twinkling of an eye, accompanied by that ruler in the territories of love.

When the prince looked at him, he beheld a wretch in bondage to the misery of desire.

Madness had fixed her abode on his head; he was cloathed as a vest with the wounds of separation.

His locks flowed like a mantle over his body, his only sandal was the callus of his feet.

In his hair stuck a comb of *Arabian* thorns; a robe of sand from the desert covered his back.

O thou, said the prince, who hast been lost in the valley of sorrow, dost thou not wish me to give thee the object of thy passion?

To exalt thee with dignity and power, to bring *Laile* before thee gratifying thy foul.

No, no, answered he, far is it from my wish, that an atom should be seen together with the sun.

“ The pain of my love for *Leila* is sufficient for me. To enjoy her presence thus would be injustice.

“ To gratify this contemptible foul of mine, a single ray from that bright luminary would be enough.

He spake and ran towards the desert, his eye weeping, and his eyelids raining tears.”

*Propert. El. 7. Lib. 17.*

Nec tantum ingenio quantum servire dolori,  
Cogor et ætatis tempora duri queri,  
Hic mihi conteritur vitæ modus, hæc mea fama est,  
Hinc cupio nomen carminis ire mei.

It is evident, that in the period, which produced those distinguished rivals,\* in the poetry of love, the finest feelings and the most elegant luxury must have prevailed; the tender passion must have diffused

\* Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovid.

fused its influence extensively, been attentively studied and perfectly understood. In fact, the three admirable writers of whom I speak, may be considered as, having established a new dynasty, in the region of poetry, as having made the sentiment of love, the pains and pleasures of that passion. Distinct and adequate objects of the muse; thus they reigned in this new province, which they had conquered for their own, with supreme sway and mastery: and displayed an excellence, which has not been surpassed, in modern times, and has only been equalled in fame, by the illustrious *Petrarch*, whose romantic destiny, however, has contributed not a little to heighten the lustre and renown of his poetical beauties.

I cannot presume to flatter myself, that there is very much novelty in the foregoing remarks. Many of them, I believe, have been anticipated by other writers; but the reader will not, as I imagine, be displeased, to see the scattered observations, which have been applied to these poets, collected, in somewhat of a regular and detailed comparison of their respective merits. As the genius of love poetry appeared first with them, it seems also to have vanished with them, and lain dormant for a considerable time, until it revived with the spirit of chivalry, and was diffused, and rendered illustrious, by the example and influence of a number of gallant and amorous potentates. Then, undoubtedly were the golden days of love and poetry. But to attend the amatory muse, in her progress to this apotheosis, must be the province of a future essay.